Book Review

Review of White, Michael D., and Aili Malm. 2020. *Cops, Cameras, and Crisis: The Potentials and the Pitfalls of Police Body-Worn Cameras*. New York: New York University Press.

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Michael White and Aili Malm position *Cops, Cameras, and Crisis: The Potentials and the Pitfalls of Police Body-Worn Cameras* (2020) “as a go-to resource for those who are interested in police body-worn cameras” (12). In brief, the authors provide an account of the rise of body-worn cameras (BWCs), summarize documented benefits and drawbacks of the technology, present explanations for the rapid diffusion of these devices in policing, and speculate on the future of BWCs (particularly the emerging challenges, such as managing officer activation compliance, public expectations of the technology, and technological advances that extend the current limits of how BWCs, and the data they collect, are used). The book begins by describing the socio-political climates in which BWCs first emerged and then flourished within. After laying this historical groundwork, the authors assess the extent to which existing evidence supports or refutes commonly held assumptions associated with BWC use. A central objective of the book is to review advocates’ and critics’ claims regarding BWCs while also evaluating empirical support for these claims to reach evidence-based conclusions about the varied (potential) effects of BWCs. In addition, White and Malm offer explanations for the relatively rapid diffusion of BWCs in policing, relying on diffusion of innovation and evidence-based policing as frameworks to both contextualize the technology’s widescale adoption and serve as foundations upon which to make predictions about the technology’s continued dispersion. Drawing on the totality of the text, the authors conclude that “BWCs are here to stay” (152) and advocate for an evidence-based approach to BWC adoption, arguing that “the benefits of BWCs can far outweigh the costs—if a BWC program is properly planned, implemented, and managed” (16). Connected to this argument, another central objective of the book is to identify forthcoming challenges faced by BWC adopters and provide strategic advice intended to guide BWC program implementation.

Across the text, the authors successfully build to their conclusion that BWCs are likely to remain central to the future of policing and develop their argument that leveraging BWCs to desirable outcomes requires attention to emerging research. The book starts with two quotes that illustrate the polarization in understandings of police use of BWCs—the first articulating commonsense expectations associated with BWC adoption and the second underscoring the need for the taken-for-granted expectations of BWCs to be recalibrated given a growing body of empirical evidence. Chapters two and three, respectively, present key optimistic and pessimistic assumptions associated with BWC adoption. Both chapters are organized by specific claims (e.g., BWCs produce a civilizing effect), with the authors summarizing research relevant to

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each specific claim. The authors also bolster their interpretations of the literature reviewed by incorporating standalone textboxes embedded within the larger narrative that present the reader with illustrative excerpts from interviews that the authors conducted with criminal justice practitioners. White and Malm's stated intent "is to present a balanced review of the issues and the evidence" (51). Although the authors are admittedly optimistic in their interpretation of the existing evidence base, I believe that White and Malm's summative conclusions are representative of the trends in the literature.

Having familiarized the reader with extant BWC research, the authors move on to make a strong case for "diffusion of innovation" as a relevant framework for understanding the rapid adoption of BWCs in policing since 2014. White and Malm's application of this theory is an aspect of this text that many surveillance studies scholars will find relevant to explaining the proliferation of all manner of data collection and management technologies. Similarly, the authors' engagement with, and advocacy for, evidence-based policing—an offshoot of the concept of evidence-based policy more generally—is a framework that surveillance studies scholars could find broadly useful because it offers a vehicle through which to demand transparency and accountability from all variety of state-sanctioned data collection and management.

Although the authors quickly characterize BWCs as a surveillance technology—a label that is no doubt obvious to *Surveillance & Society* readers but is less commonplace in the policing-BWC literature—the authors do not strongly engage with surveillance studies concepts or scholars. However, the text does provide a springboard from which scholars can more directly engage this topic from a surveillance studies perspective and, as noted above, the text engages with frameworks that are highly relevant to surveillance studies scholars. The book is most ideal for scholars with interests in policing and/or criminal justice system practitioners interested in a broad and detailed evaluation of BWCs grounded in empirical evidence. The authors' conclusion that "police BWCs are here to stay" (152)—a position that I agree with—underscores the importance of surveillance studies scholars critically reflecting on the consequences of such a reality for the future of policing and the diffusion of BWCs in society more broadly.